

SELECTED ITEMS FROM NARRATIVES OF THE CAREER  
OF HERNANDO DE SOTO IN THE CONQUEST  
OF FLORIDA

Translated by  
Buckingham Smith  
for the Bradford Club  
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CONVEYANCE OF DOWER BY THE WIDOW OF PEDRÁRIAS  
DÁVILA TO HERNANDO DE SOTO, IN CONSIDERATION  
OF THE ESPOUSAL OF HER DAUGHTER.

Be it known to all who shall see this writing, that I, Doña Ysabel de Bobadilla, wife that was of Pedrárias de Avila, deceased,—be he in glory—Governor that was of Tierra Firme, my lord and husband, declare, that inasmuch as, by the assistance of Our Lord and His Blessed Mother, espousals of marriage are concerted and contracted, by words of assent, between Doña Ysabel de Bobadilla, my legitimate daughter and of said Pedrárias, with you, Señor Captain Fernando de Soto, being at this Court of their Majesties, native and resident of the City of Badajóz, by these presents, henceforth I promise and obligate myself to give you, and do henceforth give in dower and marriage with the said Doña Ysabel de Bobadilla, my daughter, for her and for her goods of dower, that you may keep and marry her with the consent and in the peace of the Holy Mother Church of Rome, that is to say, all the cattle with their young which the said Governor, my lord and husband, established and left at Panamá, in Tierra Firme, with all the cottage, the slaves who tend the cattle, the stud of horses with them in the fields, and every thing else that to said round cottage and stock is in all or in any wise belonging, with the increase of slaves, and whatever else is thereto pertinent, which the said Pedrárias de Avila, by a clause made of his will between living, in pure and perfect gift irrevocable in favour of said Doña Ysabel de Bobadilla, my daughter, that she thereby might the better and more honorably marry, as more fully may be found in the clause referred to of said will, which I deem here inserted and incorporated with the same force and vigour it would have were it written out word for word; of the which I, for what therein belongs to me and appertains, or that can appertain, by reason of any right of dower, paraphernalia, and goods, acquired during the matrimony existing between me and the said Pedrárias Dávila, my lord and husband, as well in whatever other manner, I consent publicly, and approve consent to the aforementioned donative made by Pedro Arias, and do so by good, lasting, and genuine signature, for this and in all time of the world, for evermore . . . Done at Valladolid, the 14th day of November, of the year 1536.

One of the witnesses to this release was Juan de Añasco. The document exists in full in the *Archivo de Indias*.

LETTER OF HERNANDO DE SOTO RESPECTING  
CONCESSIONS HE DESIRES SHALL BE  
OBTAINED FOR HIM AT COURT.<sup>1</sup>



VERY MAGNIFICENT SIR:

That which Your Worship is to favour me in is as follows:

Inasmuch as His Majesty has not ceded to Francisco Pizarro more than two hundred and seventy-five leagues by Royal grant, of the six hundred that the said Governor Pizarro holds from Santiago, whence begins his government, to the mines of Callao, which divide his territory from that of Don Diego de Almagro, as will appear by an agreement made between them, must be taken off from the beginning of his government to the town of San Miguel, an extent may be of one hundred leagues, which region, from said town of Panamá, supposing now His Majesty should be pleased to grant it to me in government, is the most sterile and unprofitable of that country, although I am of opinion that by way of Quito there is good opening into the interior, whereby to serve His Majesty in the Provinces through which I came.

Your Worship, not being able to get what I have set forth, will try then for the government of Guatemala, with permission to make discovery in the South Sea, and for the title of Adelantado, with concession from His Majesty of the tenth part of whatever I may at my own cost discover in the sea, and conquer, with patent, and to my successors.

What Your Worship will send to the Señor Comendador, to be negotiated with His Majesty, is as follows:

The mantle of Santiago for Fernan Ponce de Leon, and also for me.

All the Indians of Apportionment which said Hernan Ponce de Leon and I hold by schedule from His Majesty, with other property in lands and houses,<sup>2</sup> in fee simple, and if possible with a title.

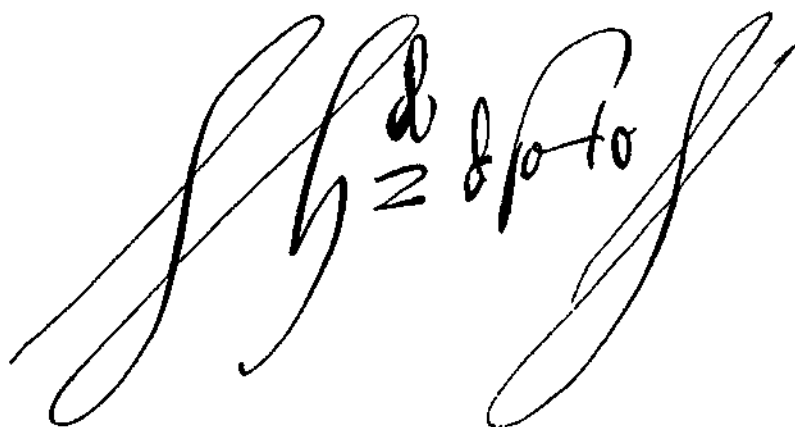
Let the government that may be got for me be in perpetuity if possible, and if not, then for the longest term Your Worship may be enabled to secure: And when you shall have acted on these instructions, and discovered where is the best chance of success, you will let me know how I am to treat with

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<sup>1</sup>The original of these instructions, only the signature to which is in the handwriting of Soto, exists in the *Biblioteca Nacional*, at Madrid. It was no doubt written while he was in Spain, in the year 1536 or 1537.

<sup>2</sup>The words *se an de dar*, to be given, are here driven through with a pen.

these Lords of the Council in the business, and what I am to write to the Señor Comendador, and when.



CONCESSION MADE BY THE KING OF SPAIN TO  
HERNANDO DE SOTO OF THE GOVERNMENT  
OF CUBA AND CONQUEST OF FLORIDA,  
WITH THE TITLE OF ADELANTADO.

[Translation made from a copy in the *Archivo de Indias* at Sevilla, rubricated by the Secretary Samano.]

THE KING.

Inasmuch as you, Captain Hernando de Soto, set forth that you have served us in the conquest, pacification, and settlement of the Provinces of Nicaragua and Perú, and of other parts of our Indias; and that now, to serve us further, and to continue to enlarge our patrimony and the royal crown,

you desire to return to those our Indias, to conquer and settle the Province of Rio de las Palmas to Florida, the government whereof was bestowed on Pánfilo de Narvaez, and the Provinces of Tierra-Nueva, the discovery and government of which was conferred on Lucas Vazquez de Ayllón; and that for the purpose you will take from these, our kingdoms and our said Indias, five hundred men, with the necessary arms, horses, munitions, and military stores; and that you will go hence, from these our kingdoms, to make the said conquest and settlement within a year first following, to be reckoned from the day of the date of these articles of authorization; and that when you shall leave the Island of Cuba to go upon that enterprise, you will take the necessary subsistence for all that people during eighteen months—rather over than under that time—entirely at your cost and charges, without our being obliged, or the kings who shall come after us, to pay you, nor satisfy the expenses incurred therefor, other than such as you in these articles may be authorized to make; and you pray that I bestow on you the conquest of those lands and provinces, and with it the government of the said Island of Cuba, that you may from there the better control and provide all the principal and important material for the conquest and settlement, whereupon I have ordered to be made with you the terms and contract following:

First, I give you, the said Captain Hernando de Soto, power and authority, for us and in our name, and in that of the royal crown of Castilla, to conquer, pacify, and populate the lands that there are from the Province of the Rio de las Palmas to Florida, the government of which was bestowed on Pánfilo de Narvaez; and, further, the Provinces of the said Tierra-Nueva, the government whereof was in like manner conferred on the said Licentiate Ayllón.

Also, purposing to comply in this with the service of God our Lord, and to do you honour, we engage to confer on you the dignity of Governor and Captain-General of two hundred leagues of coast, such as you shall designate, of what you discover, so that within four years, to be reckoned from the time you arrive in any part of the lands and provinces before mentioned, you shall choose and declare whence you would have the two hundred leagues begin; that from where you designate they shall be measured along the coast, for all the days of your life, with the annual salary of fifteen hundred ducats, and five hundred ducats gratuity, in all two thousand, which you shall receive from the day you set sail in the Port of San Lúcar, to go upon your voyage, to be paid to you from the duties and profits to us appertaining in those said lands and provinces which you so offer to conquer

and colonize; and in that time should there be neither duties nor profits, we shall not be obliged to order that you be paid any thing.

Also, we will confer on you the title of our Adelantado over the said two hundred leagues which you shall thus select and make known for your government in the said lands and provinces you so discover and colonize, and will likewise bestow on you the office of High-Constable (*Alguazil mayor*) over those territories in perpetuity.

Also, we give permission, the judgment of our officers of said province being in accord, that you build there as many as three stone fortresses in the harbours and places most proper for them, they appearing to you and to our said officers to be necessary for the protection and pacification of that country; and we confer on you the Lieutenantancy of them, and on one heir for life, or successor whom you shall name, with the annual salary to each of the fortresses of one hundred thousand maravedis, which you shall enjoy from the time they be severally built and finished and enclosed, in the opinion of our said officers; to be done at your own cost, without our being obliged, or any of the kings who shall come after us, to pay you what you may expend on those fortresses.

Again, inasmuch as you have petitioned us to bestow on you some portion of the land and vassals in said province you would conquer and populate, considering what you have served us, and the expenditure you will meet from this time in making said conquest and pacification, we receive the petitions favourably: hence we promise to bestow on you, and by these presents we do, twelve leagues of land in square in the said two hundred leagues you shall designate to hold in government in the said territories and provinces before declared, which we command our officers of the said province to assign, after you shall have designated the said two hundred leagues, to include no sea-port, nor the principal town, and that with the jurisdiction and title we shall confer at the time we give you the deeds.

Again, as has been said, you have petitioned us, that for the better governing and providing of all the principal and important matters for the conquest and settlement of said territories and provinces, I should order that there be given to you with them the government of the said Island of Cuba, which, to that end, we deem well, and is our pleasure, for the time it shall be our will, that you hold the government of said island; and for thus much we will order to be given you our provision by which you will be obliged to have a Chief-Justice, who shall be a lawyer, to whom we shall require you to pay yearly on that Island the salary of two hundred *pesos* of gold; and we give to

you five hundred ducats annual gratuity for the government of said Island, while you hold the same, to be paid from the duties and profits we may have from the province you have thus to conquer, pacify, and hold in government; and if there be none there, we shall not be obliged to pay you that, nor any other thing more than the two hundred *pesos* of the said Chief-Justice.

Also, we give you liberty and right that you from these our kingdoms and lordships, or from the Kingdom of Portugal, or Islands of Cabo Verde, or Guinea, do and may pass, or whosoever may exercise your power, to the said Island of Cuba fifty negro slaves, not less than one-third of them to be females, free of the import duties that of right may belong to us at said island, upon paying the license of two ducats on each to Diego de la Haya, which sum by our order he is charged to collect.

Again, also, we promise that upon your arrival in that country of your government, which you have thus to conquer and settle, we give liberty and right to whomsoever shall have your power, that you may take thither from these our said kingdoms, or from Portugal, or the Islands of Cabo Verde, other fifty negro slaves, the third part of them females, free from all duties.

Also, we concede to those who shall go to settle in that country within the six years first following, to be reckoned forward from the day of the date of these presents, that of the gold which may be taken from the mines shall be paid us the tenth, and the said six years being ended, shall pay us the ninth, and thus annually declining to the fifth part; but from the gold and other things that may be got by barter, or in spoil got by incursions, or in any other manner, shall be paid us thereupon one-fifth of all.

Also we give, free of import duty, to the inhabitants of that country for the said six years, and as much longer as shall be our will, all they may take for the furnishing and provision of their houses, the same not being to sell; and whatsoever they or any other, merchants or traffickers, sell, shall go free of duty for two years, and not longer.

Likewise, we promise that for the term of ten years, and until we command otherwise, we will not impose on the inhabitants of those countries any excise duty, or other tribute whatsoever.

Likewise, we grant that to said inhabitants may be given through you the lots and grounds proper to their conditions, as has been done, and is doing, in the Island of Española; and we also give you license, in our name, during the time of your government, that you take the bestowal of the Indians of that land, observing therein the instructions and provisions that will be given to you.



Again, we bestow on the hospital that may be built in that country, to assist the relief of the poor who may go thither, the charity of one hundred thousand maravedis from the fines imposed by the tribunal of that country.

Again, also, according to your petition and consent, and of the settlers of that country, we promise to give to its hospital, and by these presents we do give, the duties of *escobilla* and *relabes*, existing in the foundries that may there be made; and, as respects that, we will order our provision to be issued to you in form.

Also, likewise we will order, and by the present command and defend, that from these our kingdoms do not pass into said country, nor go, any one of the persons prohibited from going into those parts, under the penalties contained in the laws and ordinances of our letters, upon which subject this by us and by the Catholic Kings are given, nor any counsellors nor attorneys to exercise their callings.

The which, all that is said, and each thing and part thereof, we concede to you, conditioned that you, the said Don Hernando de Soto, be held and obliged to go from these our realms in person to make the conquest within one year next following, to be reckoned from the day of the date of this charter.

Again, on condition that when you go out of these our said kingdoms, and arrive in said country, you will carry and have with you the officers of our exchequer, who may by us be named; and likewise also the persons, religious and ecclesiastical, who shall be appointed by us for the instruction of the natives of that Province in our Holy Catholic Faith, to whom you are to give and pay the passage, stores, and the other necessary subsistence for them, according to their condition, all at your cost, receiving nothing from them during the said entire voyage; with which matter we gravely charge you, that you do and comply with, as a thing for the service of God and our own, and any thing otherwise we shall deem contrary to our service.

Again, whensoever, according to right and the laws of our kingdoms, the people and captains of our armaments take prisoner any prince or lord of the countries where, by our command, they make war, the ransom of such lord or cacique belongs to us, with all the other things movable found or belonging to him; but, considering the great toils and perils that our subjects undergo in the conquest of the Indias, as some recompense, and to favour them, we make known and command, that if in your said conquest and government any cacique or principal lord be captured or seized, all the trea-

tures, gold, silver, stones, and pearls that may be got from him by way of redemption, or in any other manner whatsoever, we award you the seventh part thereof, and the remainder shall be divided among the conquerors, first taking out our fifth; and in case the said cacique or lord should be slain in battle, or afterward by course of justice, or in any other manner whatsoever, in such case, of the treasures and goods aforesaid obtained of him justly we have the half, which, before any thing else, our officers shall take, after having first reserved our fifth.

Again, since our said officers of said Province might have some doubt in making the collection of our duties, especially on gold and silver, stones and pearls, as well those that may be found in sepulchres, and other places where they may be hidden, as those got by ransom and incursion, or other way, our pleasure and will is, that, until some change, the following order be observed.

First, we order that of the gold and silver, stones and pearls that may be won in battle, or on entering towns, or by barter with the Indians, should and must be paid us one-fifth of all.

Likewise, that all the gold and silver, stones, pearls, and other things that may be found and taken, as well in the graves, sepulchres, *ocues*, or temples of the Indians, as in other places where they were accustomed to offer sacrifices to their idols, or in other concealed religious precincts, or buried in house, or patrimonial soil, or in the ground, or in some other public place, whether belonging to the community or an individual, be his state or dignity what it may, of the whole, and of all other, of the character that may be and is found, whether finding it by accident or discovering it by search, shall pay us the half, without diminution of any sort, the other half remaining to the person who has found or made the discovery; and should any person or persons have gold, silver, stones, or pearls, taken or found, as well in the said graves, sepulchres, *ocues*, or Indian temples, as in the other places where they were accustomed to offer sacrifices, or other concealed religious places, or interred as before said, and do not make it known, that they may receive, in conformity with this chapter, what may belong to them, they have forfeited all the gold and silver, stones and pearls, besides the half of their goods, to our tribunal and exchequer.

And we, having been informed of the evils and disorders which occur in making discoveries and new settlements, for the redress thereof, and that we may be enabled to give you license to make them, with the accord of the members of our Council and of our consultation, a general provision of chapters is ordained and dispatched, respecting what you will have to ob-

serve in the said settlement and conquest, and we command it here to be incorporated in tenor as follows:<sup>1</sup>—

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Hence, by these presents, you, the said Captain Hernando de Soto, doing as aforesaid at your cost, according to and in the manner before contained, observing and complying with the said provision here incorporated, and all the other instructions we shall henceforth command you to obey, and to give with regard to that country, and for the good treatment and conversion to our Holy Catholic Faith of the natives of it, we promise and declare that to you will be kept these terms, and whatever therein is contained, in and through all; and you doing otherwise, and not complying therewith, we shall not be obliged to keep with you and comply with the aforesaid, nor any matter of it; on the contrary, we will order that you be punished, and proceed against you as against one who keeps not nor complies with, but acts counter to, the commands of his natural king and lord. In confirmation whereof we order that the present be given, signed by my name, and witnessed by my undersigned Secretary. Done at the town Valladolid, the twentieth day of the month of April, of the year one thousand five hundred and thirty-seven.

I THE KING.

ROYAL CEDULA PERMITTING JUAN DE AÑASCO TO  
TRAFFIC WITH THE INDIANS OF FLORIDA,  
SO LONG AS THERE ARE NO DUTIES  
ON IMPORTS IN THAT PROVINCE.

THE KING.

Inasmuch as thou on thy part, Juan de Añasco, our Comptroller of the Province of Florida, the government whereof I have conferred on the Captain Hernando de Soto, hast petitioned me to command that thou be permitted to traffic with the Indians of the Province, notwithstanding thou be our

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<sup>1</sup>This Ordinance, first placed in the charter granted to Francisco Montejo for the conquest of Yucatan, dated the seventh day of December, of the year 1526, signed by the King, his Secretary, Francisco de los Cobos, Mercurinus cancellorius, fr. G. Epus. Oxemes, Dotor Caravajal, Epus. Canariensis, el Dotor Beltram, fr. G. Epus. Civitatem, was afterwards inserted in all like concessions, and is deemed to follow here.

Comptroller there, or in such way allowed as might to us be deemed proper, we by this present do license and empower thee, so long as in that Province we shall not be paid the duties of almoxarifadgo, to bargain, contract, and traffic with the Indians thereof, alone or in company, as thou wilt, and shalt deem proper, as well in the things of these our kingdoms, as in those which in that country may be produced or may exist there; observing in respect thereof the ordinances that are or may be enacted by our Governor and officers of that Province, to the extent that neither thou nor the said company treat or contract with our exchequer, directly or indirectly, under penalty of forfeiture of our favour, and of your goods to the fiscal advantage of our Treasury. Dated at Valladolid, the fourth day of the month of May, of the year one thousand five hundred and thirty-seven.

I THE KING.

## WILL OF HERNANDO DE SOTO

*In Dei Nomine, Amen.*

Know ye who shall see this testamentary letter, that I, the Adelantado, Don Hernando de Soto, being of sound body and free mind, such as my Redeemer Jesus Christ has been pleased to bestow on me, believing firmly in what believes and holds the Holy Mother Church, in the most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons and one only true God, promising as a faithful Christian to live and die in His Holy Catholic faith, mindful of the blood that Jesus Christ shed for me as the price of my redemption, and endeavouring to repay and satisfy so great benefit, knowing that death is a natural thing, and that the more I shall be prepared for it the better will He be pleased, I declare that I commend my soul to God, who created it of nothing, and redeemed it with His most holy passion, that He place it among the number of the elect in His glory, and I order the body to the earth, of which it was made.

First, I command, should God take me from this present life on the sea, that my corpse be so disposed of, that it may be taken to the land where-soever our Lord shall be pleased it shall come to port, and should a church be there, or should one there be built, that it be deposited therein until such time as there are arrangements for taking it to Spain, to the city of Xeréz, near Badajóz, where it be consigned to the sepulchre where lies my mother, in the Church of San Miguel; and in that church I order that of my goods a

site and place be brought where a chapel be built that shall have for its invocation Our Lady of the Conception, in which edifice and work I desire there be expended two thousand ducats, one thousand five hundred in the structures and enclosure, and the five hundred in an altar-piece, representing the same Invocation of Our Lady of the Conception; and I order that vestments be made, with a chasuble, two dalmatics, an antependium and a cope, with three albs, and a chalice with its cover, both of silver, and two other chasubles for daily use, for which I direct there be paid of my goods other three hundred ducats; and I order that the mentioned vestments be of silk, of the color which to the patron and my executors, and to those of the said chapel, shall appear well; and I order that of my goods be bought a perpetual rent of twelve thousand maravedis, in good possession, which shall be given to a chaplain who shall say five masses each week for my soul, the souls of my parents, and that of Doña Ysabel de Bobadilla, my wife, and he shall be appointed by the patron of the chapel, with the understanding that should there be a clergyman of my line, who desires to be chaplain, it be given to him in preference to any other, and that he be the nearest of kin, should there be two or more.

Also, I order that if the body of my father or of my mother be in Badajóz, or in any other part whatsoever, not in that chapel, they be taken out and brought thence, and be entombed there where my body shall be, or should be placed, which is in the midst of the chapel, in such manner that the foot of the sepulchre adjoin the foot-stone of the altar; and thereon I order to be placed a tomb covered over by a fine black broadcloth, in the middle of which be put a red cross of the Commandery of the Order of the Knights of Saint Jago, that shall be for use on week-days, and another pall of black velvet, with the same cross in the midst, with four escutcheons of brocade, bearing my arms; which escutcheons I wish and order to be likewise placed on the chapel, altar-piece, and railing, and vestments, in such manner as to the patron and executors shall appear most becoming.

Also, to the end that this chapel and chaplaincy be kept in repair and appointment, the chapel and the income alike, I order that Doña Ysabel de Bobadilla, my wife, be the patroness; and, after her, should God give me children, I desire the patron to be my eldest legitimate son, or my eldest legitimate daughter, should I have no male child, that they, or either of them, who shall be the patron, may buy the site for, and make the said chapel, and do all the foregoing appertaining to it, and buy the said twelve thousand maravedis, and appoint the chaplain. And should God not grant me legitimate sons or daughters, I order that after the lifetime of my wife,

the patron be Juan Mendez de Soto, my brother, and after his life, his eldest son; and if he be without a male child, I order that the successor to that patronage be the eldest son of Catalina de Soto, my sister; and should she have no male child, let the successor thereto be the eldest son of Maria de Soto, my sister; and if it happen of the designated patrons there should be no issue male, I order the patronage to succeed to the next nearest of kin, being always male.

Also, in order that the chapel, and vestments, and rent for the chaplaincy, may always be available, and that in each year, on All Saints' Day, a mass be sung, and another on All Souls' Day, with its vigil, and offerings of bread and wine, there shall be a perpetual rent of five thousand maravedis, on good possessions, to be bought with my goods, and I order that they be used in no other way than for what is expressed.

Also, I order that on the day my body is interred, it be followed by the *curas* and clergy of the parishes, with their crosses, and by the orders there may be in the city aforesaid, and that there be paid them what is customary; and I require that each *cura*, with the clergy of their church, sing a mass on that day, and they be paid what is usual; and I order that on the same day thirty masses be said for me, and that there be paid therefor what is customary.

Also, I order that there be said twenty masses of *requiem* in the said chapel, for the soul of the Captain Compañon, and that what is usual be paid for them.

Also, that there be twenty masses of Our Lady of the Conception said in the chapel.

Also, I order that ten masses of the Holy Ghost be said in the chapel.

Also, I order that ten masses be said of All Saints in said chapel.

Also, I order that ten masses be said, five of them of the Passion, and five of the Wounds, in the aforesaid, my chapel.

Also, I order that sixty masses be said for souls in purgatory, in my said chapel; all which masses shall be said by whom my executors shall please.

Also, toward the completion of pious works, I order to each of them one real.

Also, I order for the redemption of captives, two reals.

Also, I order, that inasmuch as I gave Ysabel de Soto in espousal to Don Carlos Enriquez, and it was understood should be given with her in marriage and for dowry whatever I might think best, I order that of my goods there be given to him three thousand ducats, which are the dowry of marriage of the said Ysabel de Soto, my cousin [niece; See *ante*, p. 179].

I confess to have received in dowry with Doña Ysabel de Bobadilla, my

legitimate wife, seven thousand castellanos, of which, at the time of making this my will, I have received two thousand castellanos, the same being within my control; in Spain are deposited other two thousand in the House of Contratacion, and the remaining three thousand are in the possession of the debtor to whom was sold certain cattle in which the dowry was assigned.

Also, I admit that at the time I married Ysabel de Bobadilla, I sent her in marriage pledge six thousand ducats, all which, the seven thousand castellanos of dowry, as well as the six thousand ducats of *arras*, I order that she have and inherit of my goods, as her sole undivided property, that should belong to her of my said estate.

Also, I command that of my goods be given to my nephew, Pedro de Soto, five hundred ducats.

Also, I order that to a boy, who they say is my son, called Andrés de Soto, be given four hundred ducats from my goods.

Also, I order that to a daughter I left in Nicaragua, called Doña Maria de Soto, married to Hernan Nieto, be given one thousand ducats from my goods.

Also, I order to be given to Alonso Ayala, my mayordomo, from my goods three hundred ducats.

Also, I order that to Rodrigo Rangel, my secretary, be given, for the good service he has rendered me, three hundred ducats of my goods; to Castro, my carver, I order fifty ducats from my goods.

Also, I order two thousand ducats for the marriage of the maids of Doña Ysabel, who are Maria Arias, and Catalina Ximenes, and Mexia, and Arellano, and Carreño, which will be divided among them by Doña Ysabel de Bobadilla, my wife, as shall appear well to her, and as they shall have served her.

Also, I order to Doña Leonor de Bobadilla, in marriage, one thousand ducats, for the service that she and Nuño de Tobár have rendered, of which I desire she have five hundred, and he five hundred, to avoid delicacy or doubts.

Also, I order to Leonor de Bolaños two hundred ducats for her services.

Also, I acknowledge and declare that I have made a writing of companionship with the Captain Hernan Ponce de Leon, in which are contained many things, as will appear by it, which was executed before Domingo de la (*illegible*), public notary, resident in Lima, and of that city, in the Province of Peru, which was amended and reaffirmed, with some additions, by another writing, made and executed before Francisco Sepero, and Francisco de Alcocer, notaries of His Majesty, in the town of San Christóbal, of the Havana, in the Island of Fernandina, named Cuba, which I have present: whence I say and declare, that of all the goods that to me belong, or can be

mine, of which I have no exact knowledge, I admit that of the whole, one-half I possess are his; and of all goods whatsoever that he possesses and has, the half are mine, by reason of the partnership and brotherhood that we have formed, as contained in those writings.

Also, I declare that, in the event my body cannot be had for taking to Spain, for sepulture, as is set forth, it be no impediment or hindrance to the founding of that chapel and the chaplaincy aforesaid; but that all be done as in this my will is expressed and declared.

Also, I order, that this my will being executed in the manner set forth, of the remainder of my goods be purchased one hundred and fifty thousand maravedis of perpetual rents, in good possessions, which shall be joined with the other one hundred and fifty thousand maravedis of income which I have belonging to me of my share in the royal revenues from silk, in the city of Grenada, which, taken together, amounts to three hundred thousand maravedis, of which I wish and order to be made two parts, one, being one hundred and fifty thousand maravedis, Doña Ysabel de Bobadilla, my wife, to have and enjoy all her lifetime, and the other one hundred and fifty thousand maravedis be employed yearly in marrying three orphan damsels, daughters of some that be of my line, and to the fifth degree, the poorest that can be found; the which shall be employed by Doña Ysabel de Bobadilla, my wife, in their marriage, on whom I confer all my power complete to that full object, and they whom she shall elect and name, shall be elected and named as though I myself had done so; and if it happen that damsels shall not be found of my lineage to the fifth degree, I wish and order that they be any other damsels, orphans, daughters of nobility, of the poorest there may be in the city of Xeréz, near Badajóz, who likewise are to be selected and named by Doña Ysabel de Bobadilla, my wife; and I order that after her days the said rent of one hundred and fifty thousand maravedis I leave to her during life be united to the other hundred and fifty thousand maravedis, being three hundred thousand maravedis of rent employed in the marriage of six damsels yearly, in the same manner as hereinbefore declared of the three, to each of whom shall be given fifty thousand maravedis for their dowry—the half in money, the half in apparel and furniture; and for the better execution hereof, I leave for patrons and administrators of the three hundred thousand maravedis' rent, the very reverend fathers, the prior, or president, of the Convent of Santo Domingo, of the city of Badajóz, and the minister of the Convent of the Santísima Trinidad, of that city, and the prior of Sto. Agustin, of that city, and the guardian of San Francisco, which is within that city, who now are, or shall be, to whom I give my complete power to that



end, and I order that the persons whom they name and designate stand named and designated as if by me; and I entreat them as favour, and charge their consciences, that this be done with all diligence, for it is in the service of Our Lord, mindful of all the foregoing contained above, that they be all six damsels of nobility of my line, the nearest of kin, and to the fifth degree, and should there be no relatives of my line within this grade, I desire they be daughters of nobility, orphan damsels, the poorest there are in the city of Xeréz, of Badajóz. And should there be no orphans that are of the poorest, I give such patrons the full power I have and possess, and of right belonging to me, to receive the said three hundred thousand maravedis, and have an administrator, that they may be collected, to whom shall be paid such salary for his trouble as they shall deem just; and, that there may be memory of this, I desire that each of these reverend fathers have one thousand maravedis of alms, which, with what will have to be given the administrator, shall be taken from the said three hundred thousand maravedis.

And in order to make compliance with and protect this my will, and the bequests in it contained, I leave as my executors Doña Ysabel de Bobadilla, my wife, Captain Hernan Ponce de Leon, Juan Mendez de Soto, my brother, and Gutierrez Garay de Cardenosa, and, in default of him, his son Hernan Gutierrez Cardenosa, to whom and to each I give *in solidum* all my complete power, with general administration, and all its incidences and dependences, accidents, annexes and connexes, so much, in such case as may be requisite, that without authority of judge or superior, but of their own inherent, they may enter upon those my said goods, and take of them all that may be necessary, and sell them at public outcry, or otherwise, at very low, or bad price, to comply with all the requirements of this my will, according as they are therein contained, discharging them conformably to law.

Made in the town of San Christóbal of the Havana, on the tenth day of the month of May, in the year of the birth of Our Redeemer Jesus Christ one thousand five hundred and thirty-nine.

EL ADELANTADO DON HERNANDO DE SOTO.

All in this will contained is correct, and was set forth in the presence of Señor Fray Juan de Gallegos, and Señor Fray Francisco de la Rocha.

FRAY JUAN DE GALLEGOS.

FRAY FRANCISCO DE LA ROCHA.

Besides this, and over what is set forth, I order that all the debts that it shall appear at any time I owe, by information or truth spoken, be paid from my goods; and inasmuch as I caused some soldiers to be quartered of my

armament in the city of Santiago, and the other towns of this Island, the inhabitants of which gave them subsistence, if any thing because of this should be asked, let there be paid of my goods whatsoever shall appear I am indebted in this behalf.

Made on the said day of May, one thousand five hundred and thirty-nine years.

EL ADELANTADO DON HERNANDO DE SOTO.

*Witnesses:* FR. JUAN DE GALLEGOS.  
FR. FRANCISCO DE ROCHA.

Translated from a copy in the Lonja, at Sevilla, among the papers existing in the action of Ysabel de Bobadilla, widow, against Hernan Ponce de Leon.

The name Maria de Soto seems not to be well transcribed from the original instrument, since the mention of Doña Mencia, as the sister of Hernando, is observed to occur several times among the voluminous papers in the suit, which is in conformity with what Salazar y Castro writes in his history of the House of Silva, that Maria Enriquez de Vargas brought with her in marriage the entailed estate of Manchada, with other lands from her parents, Don Alonzo Enriquez, Prefect of Badajóz, and Doña Mencia de Soto, sister of the Adelantado of Florida.

## LETTER TO THE KING OF SPAIN FROM OFFICERS AT HAVANA IN THE ARMY OF DE SOTO.

[Original in the General Archive of the Indies, Seville.]

*On the envelope is written:—*



TO THE S. I. C. MAJESTY  
OF THE EMPEROR AND KING OUR LORD.

H. I. C. M<sup>y</sup>.

We gave relation to Your Majesty from Saint Jago de Cuba of the favourable beginning of our expedition, which, it appears, the Adelantado Don Hernando de Soto brought with his good fortune, wherewith to serve in the matter of which he comes in control. Suffice it to say, that he has thought best to look both into the state of the Island and the population, as Your Majesty is informed; but with great toil and cost to himself, as he wished to travel throughout, visiting the towns, which had much need of attention. As well has he been detained, at great expense with his soldiers, longer than he wished, while providing himself, without loss of time, in every particular useful for his conquest, managing aptly in all matters, and setting every thing in complete order.

We inform Your Majesty, that to-day, on the eve of departure, he has large vessels in port, two caravels and two brigantines, in all nine sail, having lost two since our arrival. He carries in them two hundred and thirty-seven horses, besides some of relief; three hundred and thirty foot, as well as those mounted; in all, five hundred and thirteen men, without the sailors. With these go more abundant subsistence than could have been gotten out of Spain for an armada. There are three thousand loads of *caçabi*, twenty-five hundred shoulders of bacon, and twenty-five hundred *hanegas* of maize: moreover, there are beasts on hoof for the settlement, and for the butcher, to be in readiness on the return of the vessels, through which we are to receive large supplies. With this object, the Adelantado has bought many grazing farms, at the cost of much money, to be employed solely in affording us sustenance.

In order that Your Majesty may entertain good hopes of that country of Florida, we report, that directly upon our arrival here, in order that Juan de Añasco might go with fifty men to look for some port on the coast, he was elected to be the royal Comptroller; and although he passed through many hardships, because of the winter, he found the most convenient place that could be desired very near, only some seventy-five or eighty leagues from this land, inhabited and very secure. He brought four of the Indians, as interpreters, who are so intelligent that they already understand us, after a manner, and give grand expectations of that country, so much so, that all depart joyfully and contented.

The bearer of this letter is the Captain Hernan Ponce de Leon, companion of the Adelantado, who has been a witness to all this, and is a person of whom Your Majesty can be informed in whatsoever may most interest you.

We will say no more at present, save that on arriving in the land of Florida, we will, by Divine pleasure, take particular care to give a very long relation of all that shall hereafter occur.

Our Lord guard and increase the S. I. C. life of Your Majesty with augmentation of more and greater kingdoms and lordships, as the servants of Y. M. desire.

From the town of San X'bal of the Havana, the eighteenth day of May, of the year 1539.

From Y. S. I. C. My's

Servants, who your Imperial feet kiss.

JUAN  
GAYTAN  
*Rubrica.*

JNO. DE AÑ  
ASCO  
*Rubrica.*

LUIS FERNANDEZ  
DE BIEDMA  
*Rubrica.*

criados q̃ sus ynperiales  
pies besan via

Juan  
Peytan

Don  
Pedro

Luis fernandez  
de buema

*Facsimile of Signatures to Foregoing Document*

LETTER OF HERNANDO DE SOTO AT TAMPA BAY TO THE  
JUSTICE AND BOARD OF MAGISTRATES IN  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA.

VERY NOBLE GENTLEMEN:

The being in a new country, not very distant indeed from that where you are, still with some sea between, a thousand years appear to me to have gone by since any thing has been heard from you; and although I left some letters written at Havana, to go off in three ways, it is indeed long since I have received one. However, since opportunity offers by which I may send an account of what it is always my duty to give, I will relate what passes, and I believe will be welcome to persons I know favourably, and are earnest for my success.

I took my departure from Havana with all my armament on Sunday, the XVIIIth of May, although I wrote that I should leave on the XXVth of the month. I anticipated the day, not to lose a favourable wind, which changed, nevertheless, for calms, upon our getting into the Gulf; still these were not so continuous as to prevent our casting anchor on this coast, as we did at the end of eight days, which was on Sunday, the festival of Espiritu Santo.

Having fallen four or five leagues below the port, without any one of my pilots being able to tell where we were, it became necessary that I should go in the brigantines and look for it. In doing so, and in entering the mouth of the port, we were detained three days; and likewise because we had no knowledge of the passage—a bay that runs up a dozen leagues or more from the sea—we were so long delayed that I was obliged to send my Lieutenant-General, Vasco Porcallo de Figueroa, in the brigantines, to take possession of a town at the end of the bay. I ordered all the men and horses to be landed on a beach, whence, with great difficulty, we went on Trinity Sunday to join Vasco Porcallo. The Indians of the coast, because of some fears of us, have abandoned all the country, so that for thirty leagues not a man of them has halted.

At my arrival here I received news of there being a Christian in the possession of a Cacique, and I sent Baltazar de Gallegos, with XL. men of the horse, and as many of the foot, to endeavour to get him. He found the man a day's journey from this place, with eight or ten Indians, whom he brought into my power. We rejoiced no little over him, for he speaks the language; and although he had forgotten his own, it directly returned to him. His name is Juan Ortiz, an hidalgo, native of Sevilla.

In consequence of this occurrence, I went myself for the Cacique, and came back with him in peace. I then sent Baltazar de Gallegos, with eighty lancers, and a hundred foot-soldiers, to enter the country. He has found fields of maize, beans, and pumpkins, with other fruits, and provision in such quantity as would suffice to subsist a very large army without its knowing a want. Having been allowed, without interruption, to reach the town of a Cacique named Urripacoxit, master of the one we are in, also of many other towns, some Indians were sent to him to treat for peace. This, he writes, having been accomplished, the Cacique failed to keep certain promises, whereupon he seized about XVII. persons, among whom are some of the principal men; for in this way, it appears to him, he can best secure a performance. Among those he detains are some old men of authority, as great as can be among such people, who have information of the country farther on. They say that three days' journey from where they are, going by some towns and huts, all well inhabited, and having many maize-fields, is a large town called Acuera, where with much convenience we might winter; and that afterwards, farther on, at the distance of two days' journey, there is another town, called Ocale. It is so large, and they so extol it, that I dare not repeat all that is said. There is to be found in it a great plenty of all the things mentioned; and fowls, a multitude of turkeys, kept in pens, and herds of tame deer that are tended. What this means I do not understand, unless it be the cattle, of which we brought the knowledge with us. They say there are many trades among that people, and much intercourse, an abundance of gold and silver, and many pearls. May it please God that this may be so; for of what these Indians say I believe nothing but what I see, and must well see; although they know, and have it for a saying, that if they lie to me it will cost them their lives. This interpreter puts a new life into us, in affording the means of our understanding these people, for without him I know not what would become of us. Glory be to God, who by His goodness has directed all, so that it appears as if He had taken this enterprise in His especial keeping, that it may be for His service, as I have supplicated, and do dedicate it to Him.

I sent eighty soldiers by sea in boats, and my General by land with XL. horsemen, to fall upon a throng of some thousand Indians, or more, whom Juan de Añasco had discovered. The General got back last night, and states that they fled from him; and although he pursued them, they could not be overtaken, for the many obstructions in the way. On our coming together we will march to join Baltazar de Gallegos, that we may go thence to pass the winter at the Ocale, where, if what is said be true, we shall have nothing

to desire. Heaven be pleased that something may come of this that shall be for the service of our Divine Master, and whereby I may be enabled to serve Your Worship, and each of you, as I desire, and is your due.

Notwithstanding my continual occupation here, I am not forgetful of the love I owe to objects at a distance; and since I may not be there in person, I believe that where you, Gentlemen, are, there is little in which my presence can be necessary. This duty weighs upon me more than every other, and for the attentions you will bestow, as befits your goodness, I shall be under great obligations. I enjoin it upon you, to make the utmost exertions to maintain the repose and well-being of the public, with the proper administration of justice, always reposing in the Licentiate, that every thing may be so done in accordance with law, that God and the King may be served, myself gratified, and every one be content and pleased with the performance of his trust, in such a manner as you, Gentlemen, have ever considered for my honour, not less than your own, although I still feel that I have the weight thereof, and bear the responsibility.

As respects the bastion which I left begun, if labouring on it have been neglected, or perhaps discontinued, with the idea that the fabric is not now needed, you, Gentlemen, will favour me by having it finished, since every day brings change; and although no occasion should arise for its employment, the erection is provident for the well-being and safety of the town: an act that will yield me increased satisfaction, through your very noble personages.

That our Lord may guard and increase your prosperity is my wish and your deserving.

In this town and Port of Espiritu Santo, in the Province of Florida, July the IX., in the year 1539.

The servant of you, Gentlemen.

EL ADELANTADO DON HERNANDO DE SOTO.

This document, which exists in copy only, written in a firm, clear hand, is to be found in the *Archivo de Indias*, and doubtless is that which accompanied the letter of the Licentiate Bartolomé Ortiz, dated at Santiago, the eighth day of November, 1539, addressed to the Emperor and Council of the Indias. In it he says:

"Directly as the Governor left here I fell sick in bed, and remained so three months, on which account I could not finish the bastion and bulwark he commenced. \* \* \* It may be a month since the Governor of this Island wrote from the Port of Espiritu Santo to the Board of this City,

stating his arrival in Florida, and its occurrences, a copy of which I send. He strongly urges the completion of the bastion at this port, but the magistrates oppose it; and, contrary to my commands, have ordered the assessment to cease, which is necessary for this purpose, and the following up of the wild Indians. \* \* \*

Notwithstanding the character in which the letter of the Adelantado is copied, the transcript seems to be faulty in omissions, and affords several evident mistakes of words.

LETTER TO CHARLES V FROM THE JUSTICE AND BOARD  
OF MAGISTRATES OF SANTIAGO DE CUBA, GIVING A  
STATEMENT OF OCCURRENCES ON THE ISLAND.

[Original in the General Archive of the Indies, Seville.]

*On the envelope is written:—*

TO THE SACRED IMPERIAL CATHOLIC MAJESTY,

THE EMPEROR KING OUR MASTER.

S. I. C. M.

On the seventh day of June, of the present year, the Adelantado Don Hernando de Soto arrived at this port with five ships, bringing six hundred men for the conquest of Florida. He laid before us a provision bestowing on him the government of this Island, which we receive as favour. Being mindful that he goes to serve Your Majesty in the settlement of that country, his people have been entertained among the inhabitants of the place in the best manner possible, and he now makes ready for his departure. May our Lord guide him thither, and give the success most for His service and that of Your Highness.

According to Your Majesty's command, he presented for his Chief Judge the Licentiate Bartolomé Ortiz, a civilian, long resident in these parts, of whom we hope that he will see the inhabitants receive good treatment, with considerations of justice and honour.

On the 5th of April just past, a French vessel, having seventy-eight men, entered this port, with the intention of robbing the city, at a time when it pleased God there should be found here a vessel belonging to Diego Perez, resident of Sevilla, which opposed her, the two with bombards fighting together a day and night, each killing three or four men for the other, the most



of the townspeople in the mean while going to their farmhouses and bringing together their women and property, as in the city there was no military defence or support of any sort. With this resistance, that vessel went out and went off. Now we have news that she sailed to San X<sup>o</sup>val of the Havana, on this Island, burned all the town, the church inclusive, taking a certain amount in gold, the property of persons deceased, and another of the Crusade, with one hundred and fifty dollars, the proceeds of gate duties, belonging to Your Highness, besides doing other injuries to individuals. When she left this city, they said she would return; and as it may be that these or some other Frenchmen might dare as much, we resolve to make this known to Your Majesty, that the remedy may be applied in affording the protection of some artillery with which to make defence at the wharf, and give that security which a half dozen of large calibre and a dozen culverins we think sufficient to insure. These we beg that Your Highness will order to be sent to us, and the necessary ammunition from the House of Contratacion in Sevilla, with the haste possible; for if this town be burned or destroyed, the Island is ruined, and the injury is great. God will not permit that the Church and other stone edifices shall be consumed. They have cost much to erect, and could not be rebuilt in a long time.

We likewise make known to Your Majesty that, eight months since, twenty or thirty wild natives insurged, and have committed many atrocities, killing Christians, Spaniards, negroes, domestic Indians, and herds, and setting farms on fire. Although this Board has from the first sent a force against them, which killed many, they continue to do harm; and the Adelantado, having got this information, directly upon his arrival in this city sent out a troop of Spaniards, with negroes and tame Indians, at the cost of the assessment we have made here; and having also ordered out another party, from the town of San Salvador, the two are now in their pursuit. We hope these may be overtaken and chastised, that the evil may cease. Nothing has been heard as yet. Since there are no arms here nor on the Island, and standing in much need of some, it will be necessary that Your Highness require that from Sevilla there be provided for us as many as fifty thousand maravedis, the half for crossbows, shafts, strings, and appurtenances, the other half in lances and bucklers. We ask Your Majesty will order that the money be laid out in the Contratacion of Sevilla, and the arms sent to us in the first ship that comes to this city, when directly as they arrive we will pay the royal officers the amount thus spent.

Money has been requisite to make this war upon the Indians, who do so great mischief, and to protect us from the French vessels. The Board, being

without any for the purposes, was obliged to raise as many as three hundred dollars gold by assessment of the community. We entreat that Your Majesty be pleased to deem the act properly done, the greater part being paid by the principal persons of the Island; and that, should one or two hundred more be found necessary, Your Highness will favour us by directing that we be authorized and empowered to raise the sum, which, beyond our great obligations, is a necessary measure for the welfare of the land.

From what has been already said, it may be seen how greatly this Island and people need that Your Majesty should order that they be favoured and assisted, lest every thing be lost, and they go away to Florida, Peru, and other parts to find support, which occasion, to many residents, appears to be at hand. Should Your Highness be pleased to permit that all the gold which is got by the Indians and negroes pay the tenth part during seven or eight years, the mines would be sought out and worked unattended by the frauds and deceptions practised at the time of melting the metal, many per-juring themselves in statements that it is got by the negroes, when it is procured by Indians. So small is the quantity obtained, because of the hindrance, that it does not annually amount to thirteen thousand dollars; and, making this concession, every one would strive to discover mines, and not cease to look after gold, as many have done, to engage in fields of other labour and pursuits, whence the income of Your Majesty is less, and the inhabitants continue very poor.

We entreat that it may serve Your Highness to command this favour: that a stone fortress be directed to be built in the Havana; and all the citizens of this place, with the residents, beseech that, in consideration of the want also here of one for defence, it serve you to direct that a fortress be built at this port, to be a permanency in the Island, so that, though many French vessels come, it may be able successfully to prevent their entrance here. This fabric would be the avoidance of many evils, put the inhabitants in heart to remain and settle here; or otherwise, Your Majesty may be assured that this city is in danger of being pillaged and burned, whenever it is the disposition of the French that it should.

The Bishop of the Island arrived here ten or twelve days after the Adelantado came; consequently we have rejoiced much, his presence giving us great consolation, and we trusting in God that it will be very profitable, both for the Island and its inhabitants. As he writes to Your Majesty, nothing remains to be said more than refer to what he states.

Sacred I. C. Majesty our Master. Be the Imperial person of Your Majesty preserved, and your dominion enlarged, as we your vassals desire.

From the City of Santiago, of the Island of Fernandina, the XXVI. day of July, of the year 1539.

From Y. S. I. C. Majesty's humble vassals, who kiss your royal feet and hands.

JUAN DE LA TORRE.

INO. ARMANSA.

LOPE HURTADO.

ANDRES PARADA.

THORIBIO DE CASTRO.

By order of the Justice and Board of Magistrates:

X<sup>o</sup>VAL DE TORRES,

*Notary Public, and of the Board.*